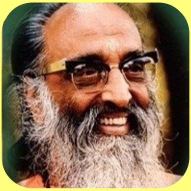
Patrika

Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles

FEBRUARY 2015



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CHINMAYA MISSION
LOS ANGELES
Vedanta, Wisdom, Spiritual Growth

Chinmaya Rameshwaram

Upcoming Events

Holi Picinic and CORD Walkathon	Mar 8	9:00 am - 12:00 pm
CHYK Class: Break the Bondage by Swami Ishwarananda	Mar 11	7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Rama Navami Celebrations *Program details available on website*	Mar 19-28	
Just for Seniors -Event for 55+	Mar 19	9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Kalanjali Event: The Legacy Continues	Mar 29	6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Bhagavad Gita Discourse Series by Swami Ishwarananda	Every Sunday	9:00 am - 10:15 am 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm
Fundamentals of Vedanta Lectures by Acharya Mahadevan	Every Sunday	9:00 am - 10:15 am 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm
Yoga Classes	Every Thursday	7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Guided Vedic Chanting by Swami Ishwarananda	Every Saturday	6:30 am - 7:30 am
****Save the Date**** Bhagavad Gita Chanting International Competition (Chapter 15): CMLA Prelims *Details available on website*	April 25	
****Save the Date**** Memorial Day CHYK Retreat In The Woods Of Contemplation	May 22-25	
****Save the Date**** Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji's Gita Jnana Yagna: Chapter 4	Jun 28-Jul 4	
****Announcing**** CMLA Annual Yatra 2015 Shatjyotilinga Darshanam	Dec 1-10	

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Thus Spake The Master

Don't serve as if you are doing others a favor. Instead be grateful to others for giving you a chance to serve.

- Swami Chinmayananda

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Over Thirty Years Of Service To Humanity

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Words Of The Wise

Learn to serve and obey your Guru with devotion and humility. Then you can master any spiritual sadhana, leading you to the Realization of the Truth.

- Swami Tejomayananda

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THINK!

Self-realization is a dynamic process. It is not a static fact that can be written down as a conclusion of a logical procedure. If it were, then the living presence and guidance of a Guru could be considered optional. Guru is not a person; it is a dynamic presence, expressing through one's own preceptor.

- Swami Ishwarananda

for e-Satsang blog, click here

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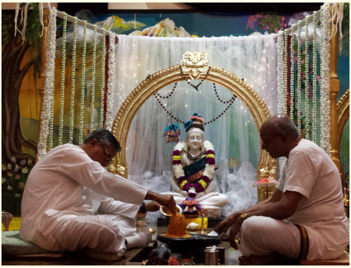
Devotion and Prayer at Mahashivaratri

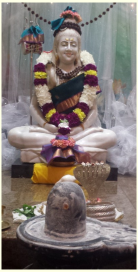
Chinmaya Mission celebrated Maha Shivaratri with great enthusiasm on Feb. 17.

Leading up to the auspicious day, several sessions of Shiva Sahasranama archana were conducted by Bala Vihar parents, teachers and volunteers all of who were from the main center Chinmaya Rameshwaram as well as the wide spread satellite centers of CMLA. Swami Ishwarananda also led groups of bala vihar students from grades 7-9 in doing the Shiva Ashtottara puja.

Volunteers too were busy on the days leading to Shivaratri, decorating the altar with flowers and other materials till it seemed the Lord was seated in the snowy mountains of Kailash itself.

On Shivaratri day, devotees from various parts of Southland assembled in the early hours to witness and participate in the day's pujas and rituals. Pandit Sivaramakrishnan, ably assisted by other ritviks performed Mahanyasam and Ekadasa Rudram, while Acharya Mahadevanji, performed the Rudra Abhishekam at the altar. The Rudra homam that followed was conducted in a traditional manner.





The evening events commenced at 5:30 pm with cultural offerings. Students of the 'Shrishti School of Performing Arts' presented a dance piece in praise of Lord Shiva, followed by 'Shivaanjali' by the 'Shakti School of Bharat Natyam'. Later, as devotees lined up to perform abhishekam with milk to the Shiva Linga at the altar, wonderful bhajans by the children of the Junior and Senior groups of Chinmaya Shruti were sung. They were followed by the adult choir, Chinmaya Swaranjali who also rendered songs in praise of the Lord.

Evening puja included Ekadasa Rudra abhishekam, performed by Balasubramanian while the puja group led the assembled devotees in the chanting of the holy Rudram Chamakam.

Mangala arati just past midnight concluded the day's events. Several members who had fasted through the day, then partook of the light prasad that was served.

FOR THE RECORD

Shiva Abhishekam by Swamiji and his Mother
on Mahashivaratri (17th Feb, 2015)

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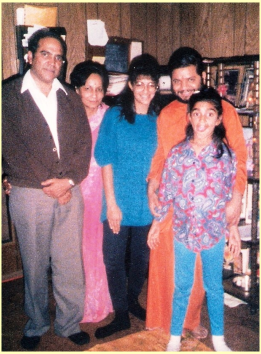
Reflections On Guruji

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda will visit Chinmaya Rameshwaram from June 28-July 4, this year. As CMLA readies in excitement to welcome him and eagerly wait to hear him speak on "Foster your Freedom" based on the Bhagavad Gita, ***Patrika*** *brings to you the reflections of a few members who have had the blessed opportunity to have spent time in his presence and to have learned at his feet.*

Nirmal and Vithlaish Nanda



Nirmal and Vithlaish Nanda, members of Chinmaya Mission since its fledging presence in Los Angeles, recount their memories of Guruji from the time before he became the head of CM worldwide:

We met Guruji for the first time at the International Camp at Flint, Michigan, conducted by Puja Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda.

When we saw him at Gurudev's first lecture, he looked tired as he had just arrived from India. His luggage was misplaced and Gurudev had to help him out with some clothes!!

The first thing that struck us about Guruji was his humbleness. Throughout the camp he was very amenable and took time to talk to all of us.

Years later, when he stayed with us during one of his early visits to Southern California, he recollected the bhiksha we had had the privilege of serving him at Flint which included Kanda Pawa! Guruji at that time had joked and asked how could it be asked of a Punjabi to make Kanda Pawa? When he was at our home, he remembered the Flint bhiksha and followed that up by teaching how to make the dish properly.

What we have learned from Guruji: His simplicity and compassion as a person has had a profound effect on us. It has helped us to be humble and have faith when facing life's ups and down.

Ramaa and Nagraj Pillutla

Ramaa and Nagraj Pillutla have been actively contributing to the growth of CMLA from the early years as teachers and volunteers, among other things. Here from Ramaa:

We met Guruji in 1986 during a camp in Michigan. Pujya Gurudev introduced him to camp delegates. Our first impression was he looked like a very kind person.

The next time we met him was at our house. Someone called us to say that Swamiji was in a motel in L.A., and he wanted some Indian food! We invited him, and Nagaraj told Swamiji that I could sing. I sang a Surdas bhajan for him. Tears were flowing from his eyes! Since then, he asks me to sing it every time he sees me. Of course, ever since I lost my vocal chords, I haven't been able to sing for him.

What we have learned from Guruji: Guruji really makes time for people when they are in pain and need someone to talk to. In our interaction with him over the years and this is the one thing that I have learned from him: kindness toward people.

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CORP Holds Workshop On Financial Statement Analysis

CORP
Chinmaya Organization for Responsible Professionals
Hari Om and Welcome!
Own Your Business:
Financial Skills for Business Owners/ Leaders
Sat Parashar, PhD

Chinmaya Organization for Responsible Professionals in its monthly series of meetings held the first of a two part series for entrepreneurs focusing on financial statement analysis and business valuation.

The workshop conducted by Sat Parashar on Feb. 7 was a highly engaging one that explained the accounting cardiograph. Attendees learned the details of a profit/loss statement, the balance sheet and cash flow statements.

To make it more interactive, Parashar used the live example of the Costco company financials and explained how each statement provided details about the firm. He also explained commonly used terms like profitability, EBITDA and other financial metrics.

As the budding entrepreneurs gained a foundation for analyzing financial statements, they said they looked forward to attending the next part of the series on March 21.

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Kalanjali Hosts Musical Entertainer

On Feb 7, Kalanjali hosted 'Tunes & Scales', a musical entertainer presented by Subhapriya Srivatsan, a vocalist from Northern California, and her entourage of musicians.

Kalanjali
Chinmaya Mission, Los Angeles

Subhapriya, trained foremost by her parents, Radha and Thiruvaiyaru Krishnan has performed extensively, both, as a soloist and as a member of the Trio, *Krishnan Sisters.* She began her recital with a semi classical Hindustani invocation and followed it with a Sanskrit composition by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda. She then had an extempore presentation of how musical scales transform to become melodic tunes to paint emotions - be it through a Carnatic music composition by a saint, through a devotional bhajan in semi-classical Hindustani style, through a romantic unfold from a vintage Hindi film or peppy film songs drawn from today's South Indian movies. She wove them seamlessly - from a classical piece to a lilting Ghazal in 20 minutes, wowing the audience.

The concert that followed included two dozen popular ragams and raags crisscrossing the Carnatic and Hindustani effortlessly showing her prowess in the grammar of Indian classical music. In her silky voice she rendered popular film songs and immortal ghazals in the 150 minute show.

Matching her dexterity were her accompanying musicians. Ravi Gutala on tabla, Vijayakumar Venkatesan on key board, Lavanya Kaushik on violin and flautist Kaushik Lakshminarayanan delighted the audience. Subhapriya's 13- year- old son Keshavan Srivatsan, also won the audience with his renditions on the violin.

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Anubhava: CORD Seva Trip 2014

by Sneha Krish

"We believe that the service of our country is the service of the Lord of Lords, and devotion to the people is devotion to the Supreme Self."

For 11 years, every single Sunday, I touched my heart and said these words, knowing that one day Chinmaya Mission would give me an opportunity to uphold the meaning behind the pledge. This past December, I, along with 23 high school students, packed my bags to go on a service trip to the Chinmaya Organization of Rural Development in Thamaraipakkam, a village situated close to Chennai. I could not believe my luck- I would be in a different country for two weeks trying to make a difference.

When we arrived, Priya Amma, the coordinator of the CORD Thamaraipakkam center, began by saying, “Though all of you have come from all over the United States to serve us, you will realize that you receive more in this process than you give.” As every day passed, I saw the truth behind her words.

Our first days went by in the farm sector, where we helped local farmers by building azola ponds and compost pits. To privileged teenagers from the United States, these tasks were not only foreign, but also surprising. At home, when we put rice on our plate, we don’t think of where it came from or how much labor is needed to be put in to harvest one grain.

The farmers meet in a union called the Farmers’ Club, a program introduced by CORD, where they discuss issues collectively and make important decisions. It was heart wrenching to hear how the value of one bushel of rice had depreciated due to taxes and other expenses until it became no more than a $1.50. $1.50 for one whole harvest- we wondered how a whole family could be supported with that amount. Yet they took everything into stride and looked at each challenge as a cloud that would pass. Through them, I learned to be inspired.

We spent time with children in a government school, and our group presented a skit that impressed upon them the importance of education. By the age of 14 or 15, most children in rural India drop out of school to help their parents bring in an income. Girls, especially, are discouraged from pursuing an education. When we left, we rewarded them with three crayons and a couple color pencils. Dozens of “Thank you Akkas” and joyful screams filled the air- how could children with so little, be so happy? Through them, I learned to be grateful.

Our next days were spent with the women and adolescent girls of the village, who gave us a glimpse of the restricted, judgmental world they live in. CORD has instilled a strong desire for change within these women. They engage in Income Generation Activities under the brand name Gurudhara. We spent the whole morning learning the tricks of the trade by making rose-scented incense sticks and paper jewelry. Since nobody in the village buys such trinkets, the women have to walk or hitch rides all the way to Chennai to sell them. They have a small women’s government set up, with a pool of money set aside for public works expenses around the village. They loan money out and set an interest rate on it so that their “bank account” keeps increasing in value. When asked about what the men think, they uncomfortably admitted that, though their efforts have made the surroundings safer, they still do not get the respect they deserve- the empowerment group is derogatorily called a “gossip group”. Without their husbands’ permission, they cannot do anything. One woman said that even if they wanted to become the Panchayat, or neighborhood, leader, it was just in name; the husbands would take over because “that work isn’t fit for a woman”. The women hope to be treated equally someday. Through them, I learned to hope.

For the next few days, we constructed toilets for a family in the village of Sivanvoyal. It was the first encounter we had with hard labor since we had to layer bricks, mix cement, and plaster the walls we created. I was shocked by the long workdays and working conditions, as well as concerned for the worker who showed us how to construct the toilet. Through CORD, there may be one day where the government recognizes the value of these workers and provides them with the rights that are necessary. To them, a little sweat and a few long days meant filling their children's stomachs with food. Through them, I learned to work hard.

Finally, we interacted with those who were disabled. Silambarasan Sir and Thangaraj Sir, who suffer from limb deformities, traveled all across India visiting various CORD facilities to observe the treatment of people with disabilities. When they returned to Thamaraipakkam, they launched an aid program that made the disabled aware of various rights and compensations provided by the government. The hardest hurdle to cross was the lack of self-esteem and public judgment faced by the disabled. Weaned away from begging, CORD has provided the disabled with options and is changing public mentality slowly, making people realize how valuable everyone is. As volunteers, we planned and organized a Disability Empowerment Day. Interacting with them, we learned, for them, there was only one direction: forward. Through them, I learned to persevere.

If I had to choose one word to describe my CORD journey, it would be: heart-warming. I was lucky enough to spend two whole weeks making friends, empowering others, and most of all, creating a bond of love and understanding while practicing the values I learn everyday in Balvihar. I would like to conclude by emphasizing the importance of CORD's mission: to help design a sustainable program to aid in the holistic welfare of rural India. The smiling faces that we encountered in Thamaraipakkam will live in my heart forever.

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Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raghunathan at nimmicmla@gmail.com

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